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CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEW ENGLAND FOLK-LORE.

THE following story about cucumbers I have heard told as a wise saying of many a doctor in Vermont, and each one is believed to be the originator of the recipe : Take a cucumber and peel it, cut it into very thin slices, put on vinegar, salt, and pepper, then *throw it out to the hogs*, and it will not hurt one. The italicized words are spoken more rapidly than the others, accompanied with a cunning smile.

Another smart saying I have heard repeated in many towns : Eat dried apple for breakfast, drink cold water for dinner, and let the apple swell for supper.

Children should not be allowed to rap in sport at their own door for admission, for it is a sign of sickness or death in the family. (Grafton County, N. H.)

If the lungs of a brother or sister who has died of consumption be burned, the ashes will cure the living members of the family affected with that disease. (Grafton County.)

A short time ago I was visiting a patient one evening¹ in a family, when one of her neighbors related the following incident : About five years ago she and her husband were at home alone on Sunday afternoon, the children all being away, when they heard a moaning noise in the wood-box. They both heard it distinctly. It sounded like the groans of one in distress. They examined the box to see if any cause could be found therein. Finding none, they went into the cellar underneath the box ; also went around the house, but nothing was discovered that could explain the moaning. When the cover to the box was lifted up, the noise ceased ; when let down, and they went away from it, the noise began again. This was repeated several times, then ceased entirely. During that week they received a letter announcing the death of a relative's wife, who died on Sunday, and just at the hour when they heard the moaning in the wood-box. It was confirmed in their minds that that moaning was a warning of the death of their relative. (Orleans County, Vt.)

In dressing a new-born babe, lay the umbilical cord to the left, and the child will not wet the bed when sleeping. (Orleans County.)

¹ I have always noticed that these wonderful witch and ghost stories flow more freely in the night than in the day time.

In the summer of 1852 I was at a farmhouse in a rural town in Grafton County, New Hampshire, when a travelling woman, coarsely dressed, called to get a glass of water to drink, and inquire the distance to the next village. She drank the water and started on her journey. Scarcely had she gone thirty rods when the woman of the house said she believed the traveller was a witch, and she was going to try her. She immediately took a knitting-needle from her work, found one of the traveller's tracks in the path, and stuck the needle into it. Almost immediately the traveller stopped, turned around, stood still, and gazed towards us, who were watching the trial. The woman of the house said she would not remove the needle from the track, even if the traveller should never move again ; but she turned soon, and went on without stopping. The woman with the needle believed the steel had power to fasten a witch in her tracks so she could not move, and when she saw that the woman went on her way, she believed the power was lost by her speaking ; so she tried another track with the needle, but without effect.

At the foot of a steep and rugged mountain in a New Hampshire town, where the highway has scarcely room to be built between the precipitous ledges and the Connecticut River, lived a woman, between 1840 and 1850, who believed in all sorts of witchcraft. Every pain she had she thought was caused by witches. Every perplexity of life was caused by evil spirits. When she was sick she was often overheard talking to and threatening the witches, whom she could not see, but did not doubt their presence. For years she constantly wore a string of beads of mountain ash around her neck to keep off the witches. These beads were made from the small branches of the mountain ash (*Pyrus Americana*, D. C.), sometimes called witchwood. They were cut about three eighths of an inch in length, the bark being left on, and strung on a string running through the pith. She was careful to keep them concealed, but sometimes they would work up above her collar and be conspicuous. This species of tree was once quite popular among New England witch-believers as a charm against witches.

In one of the inland towns in Grafton County, New Hampshire, the following story was told of a woman, between 1830 and 1845, who was accused of being a witch : She called one day at the house of one of her neighbors, who had ten fine pigs only a few days old, and wanted the owner to give her one. She was informed that all of them had been promised and sold, so that he could not accommodate her. She replied that if he did not give her one he would be sorry for it. The woman left the house, and in about two hours

afterwards the ten pigs jumped upon the rail fence and scampered off like squirrels, and never returned, nor were they ever heard from.

In another town in Grafton County, New Hampshire, in about 1820, lived a family who believed in witches. One day their oldest child, a boy four years of age, was taken sick. The mother at once suspected that he was bewitched by a neighboring woman; and, while she was caring for him, the boy looked out of the window across a ravine, and said he saw the woman suspected coming over the hill to trouble him, and called her by name. The mother looked out, but could not see her, being invisible to her but plainly visible to the boy, who dreaded her. The woman suspected was a particular object of hatred to the mother, who was the more exasperated because of the invisibility to her and visibility to her boy. The boy recovered as soon as the suspected woman left his presence.

In the town of Ryegate, Vermont, in 1846, lived a man who believed in witchcraft, warnings, ghosts, etc. I heard him remark one day that he had observed a white bird flying slowly in circles over a neighboring graveyard. He expressed himself very confidently that it would not be long before there would be several burials in that yard. He said he had observed the occurrence many times, and never knew it to fail. I have heard this belief expressed many times since in other New England towns, and think the belief among the uneducated is more prevalent at the present time than is generally supposed.

Between 1845 and 1855 there lived a blacksmith in the town of B——n, N. H., who was a firm believer in witchcraft. One day a man came into his shop to get a small job of work done forthwith, being in a hurry to return to his work. The blacksmith suspected him possessed with powers of witchcraft, and determined to try him under some of the popular rules for the detection of his art; so he nailed a horseshoe over the door, believing that if so possessed he would be unable to pass out of the shop under it. The man's job was immediately finished; but, instead of starting for home, he lingered in the shop nearly all the forenoon, and seemed in no hurry to get away, pretending that he was waiting to see a man who, he thought, would shortly pass that way. This sudden change in the plans confirmed the blacksmith in his suspicions of the man's character, and he removed the shoe from over the door, and the man started for home at once.

In 1846 I was informed by an intelligent woman, in a rural town

in New Hampshire, that she was weaving one day when all at once her loom and web began to act badly ; she tried to "fix" it, but it persisted to get out of fix just as often as she could set it right. She believed it was bewitched, and threatened to heat some water and scald the witch that was the cause of her trouble. The water was put upon the stove to heat, but before the water had time to boil, the witch departed and the web worked as well as ever.

On another occasion, this same woman churned three days on some cream before the butter would come, and then only after she had threatened to throw the cream into the fire.

I once attended a woman in confinement in one of the northern towns of Vermont, in about 1863 or 1864, when the following incident occurred : As soon as the child was born, the grandmother brought along one of the mother's shoes and requested me to place it over the child's head. Several of the neighboring women were in at the time, and we all were so amused at the request that it was not granted nor repeated. The object of this request I never could find out.

If candles are dipped on Friday, there will be a death in the family within one year. (Southern Vermont.)

John McNab Currier.